

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant responds herein to the non-final Office Action mailed October 18, 2011 in the above-identified patent application.

Claims 14 and 15 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, claims 1, 2, 5-8, 10-12 and 14-18 are the claims currently pending in the present application.

Claims 2, 5-8, 10 and 16-18 are amended to clarify features recited thereby. These amendments are fully supported by Applicant's disclosure see, for example, Specification, page 5, line 27 and claim 14 (now having been cancelled) with respect to the amendment to claim 5, and page 7, lines 8-19 and reference numeral 17 in Fig. 1 of the Drawings with respect to the amendments to claim 10.

Applicant notes with appreciation Examiner's statement on page 9 of the Office Action that claims 11, 12 and 16 are allowable.

Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 5-8, 10, 14, 15 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1, 2, 5-8, 10, 14, 15 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, on the ground that claim 1 is directed to a single flanged member and therefore the recitation "configured" to interact with a portion of a second flange member, which is not claimed, is indefinite and unclear; that the recitation "variably concave" in claim 3 is unclear; that in claim 11 is unclear whether the outermost abutment point of the load transferring surface is also the outermost point of the flanged member, and similarly with the "innermost abutment point;" and that in claim 16 it is unclear in what way the term "directly contact" further limits claim 11.

Claims 1, 14 and 15 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer and therefore the rejection is moot as to these claims.

Claim 3 is amended.

With respect to claim 11, it is noted that the outermost abutment point of the load transferring surface has the attribute that it is farthest in the radial direction from the central axis of the first flange member. This point need not be the farthest point in the radial direction of the flanged member, since there may or may not be a portion of the flanged member distal to the load transferring surface, and such a portion of the flanged member would be irrelevant to this aspect of claim 11.

With respect to claim 16 it is noted that the term “directly contact” precludes the presence of a gasket or other such feature or the like that would be positioned between the load transferring surfaces.

Rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Watkins et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,183,562. Reconsideration of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and therefore the rejection is moot as to this claim.

Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 5-8, 10, 14, 15, 17 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2, 5-8, 10, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious from Buono, U.S. Patent No. 2,940,779. Reconsideration of this rejection is respectfully requested.

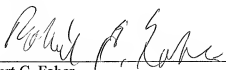
Claims 1, 14 and 15 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and therefore the rejection is moot as to these claims.

The remaining rejected dependent claims now depend from claim 11, which the Examiner indicates is allowable.

In view of the foregoing discussion, withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the claims of the present application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Robert C. Faber
Registration No.: 24,322
OSTROLENK FABER LLP
1180 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10036-8403
Telephone: (212) 382-0700

RCF:GB/jl